

REMARKS

Claims 2-4, 7-10, 13-15 and 17- 20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 2 is amended to incorporate the features of claims 5 and 6, claim 10 is amended to incorporate the features of claims 11 and 12, claims 5, 6, 11 and 12 are canceled, claims 7 and 9 are amended to change their dependency from canceled claim 5 to pending claim 2, and claims 13 and 18 are amended to change their dependency from canceled claim 11 to pending claim 10. Thus, no new matter is added by this Amendment.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments:

(a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments merely combine the features of dependent claims with the respective base claim and intervening claim; (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection and Notice of Panel Decision from Pre-Appeal Brief Review. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner and Panel for the indication that claims 6, 8, 12 and 14 contain allowable subject matter. To this end, claim 2 is amended to incorporate the features of claim 6 and intervening claim 5; and claim 10 is amended to incorporate the features of claim 12 and intervening claim 11. Thus, as acknowledged by the Patent Office, claims 2 and 10, as well as the claims depending therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and §103(a)

Claims 1, 2, 4 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,923,521 (Bates); (2) claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Bates in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,742,866 (Anderson); (3) claims 5, 7 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Bates in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,595,614 (Morikawa); and (4) claims 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Morikawa in view of Bates and Anderson. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is canceled, thus the rejection of claim 1 is moot. Claims 2 and 10 are amended to incorporate acknowledged allowable subject matter, as discussed above. Thus, the rejection of claims 2 and 10, as well as the claims depending therefrom, is moot.

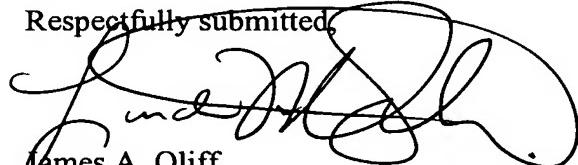
Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Linda M. Saltiel
Registration No. 51,122

JAO:LMS/cxm

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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